

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8977
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL
USCINCSO QUARRY HTS CZ

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 5356

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, EC
SUBJECT: CONTINUED CONCERN ABOUT POSSIBLE VOTE COUNTING
SHENANIGANS

REF: QUITO 5305

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE JAIME ROLDOS AND THE
HEAD OF THE ESMERALDAS PROVINCIAL ELECTORAL TRIBUNAL BOTH MADE
JULY 31 APPEARANCES BEFORE THE SUPREME ELECTORAL TRIBUNAL (SET).
ROLDOS MADE AN IMPASSIONED PLEA FOR THE SET TO MOVE AHEAD
WITH THE VOTE COUNT AND CARRY OUT THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE. THE
SET CONTINUES TO STUDY THE PROBLEM OF IRREGULARITIES IN
ESMERALDAS AS NEW REPORTS SURFACE THAT THOSE PROBLEMS ARE ONLY
A PRELUDE TO MORE SERIOUS IRREGULARITIES TO COME. THE
VICE PRESIDENT OF THE SET HAS BEEN A MAJOR CONTRIBUTOR TO THIS
NEW SPATE OF RUMORS WITH HIS REPEATED STATEMENTS THAT THE
ESMERALDAS IRREGULARITIES ARE ONLY A "PALLID REFLECTION"
OF WHAT IS YET TO COME. END SUMMARY#
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2. JAIME ROLDOS, FRONT-RUNNING PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE,
APPEARED PERSONALLY BEFORE THE SUPREME ELECTORAL TRIBUNAL
ON JULY 31 AND DELIVERED AN IMPASSIONED PLEA THAT THE
SET RESPECT AND PROMOTE THE RETORNO PROCESS. HE REPEATED
HIS JULY 29 CLAIM THAT THERE IS A MOVE AFOOT BY
"OLIGARCHIC" ELEMENTS TO PRODUCE A COUP AND WARNED THAT THE

PEOPLE WOULD NOT TOLERATE SUCH MANIPULATION. HE SAID EVERYONE MUST ACCEPT THE RULES OF THE DEMOCRATIC GAME WHICH GIVES THE PEOPLE THE LAST WORD. HE DENIED THAT THE CFP WAS INVOLVED IN FRAUD IN ANY AREA, BUT CLAIMED THAT FRAUD IS BEING PREPARED IN ORDER TO THWART THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE.

3. ALSO ON JULY 31 SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE ADMINISTRATION, VADM VICTOR HUGO GARCES, THE SPOKESMAN FOR THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT, REITERATED THE GOE INTENTION TO STAND BEHIND THE RETORNO. HE ADDED THAT THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT HAS NVEVER CONSIDERED AN INTERIM PRESIDENCY, AND THAT SUPREME COURT PRESIDENT CONZALO KAROLYS WAS SPEAKING PERSONALLY AND FROM A PURELY LEGAL POINT OF VIEW WHEN HE SAID ON JULY 28 THAT HE WOULD ACCEPT AN INTERIM PRESIDENCY IF THERE WERE A CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS. GARCES' STATEMENT WAS PROMPTED BY ROLDOS' JULY 29 STATEMENT (SEE REFTTEL) AND COMMENTS BY OTHER POLITICIANS ABOUT KAROLYS' STATEMENT.

4. ALSO APPEARING BEFORE THE SET ON JULY 31 WAS THE HEAD OF THE ESMERALDAS ELECTORAL TRIBUNAL WHO DEFENDED HIS GROUP'S ACTIONS IN THE CONTROVERSIAL TABULATIONS FROM THAT PROVINCE. HE SAID THE WORKERS AT THE INDIVIDUAL TABLES SUFFERED FROM FATIGUE, LACK OF CLEAR INSTRUCTION AND CARELESSNESS THE NIGHT OF ELECTIONS, BUT THAT THE PROBLEMS WHICH OCCURED IN ESMERALDAS WERE NOT SERIOUS ENOUGH TO

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JUSTIFY NULLIFYING THE VOTES. HE SUGGESTED THAT THE SET COUNT THE VOTES ITSELF IF IT WERE NOT SATISFIED WITH THE PROVINCIAL REPORT.

5. MEANWHILE, SET VICE PRESIDENT RAFAEL ARIZAGA VEGA REPEATED HIS STATEMENT OF SEVERAL DAYS EARLIER THAT THE ESMERALDAS IRREGULARITIES WERE ONLY A "PALLID REFLECTION" OF THE FRAUD YET TO COME. WHEN CHALLENGED BY THE MEDIA TO SUBSTANTIATE HIS STATEMENT, ARIZAGA WAFFLED AND SAID THAT HE COULD NOT DIVULGE THE INFORMATION. ARIZAGA IS OUT-SPOKEN AND AVOWEDLY PARTISAN (HE HAS INDICATED HIS PREFERENCE FOR RAUL CLEMENTE HUERTA AND IS ALSO CONSIDERED MINGOV JARRIN'S STRONGEST LINK ON THE SET). REACTION TO ARIZAGA'S STATEMENT HAS BEEN ACROSS-THE-BOARD NEGATIVE, EMPHASIZING THAT A SET OFFICIAL HE HAS NO RIGHT TO MAKE SUCH STATEMENTS UNLESS HE CAN AND WILL PROVIDE EVIDENCE TO SUBSTANTIAGE THEM. THE CFP, A VELASQUISTA LEADER AND THE HEAD OF A SMALL, CENTER-RIGHT PARTY HAVE MADE PARTICULARLY STRONG ATTACKS ON ARIZAGA.

6. IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ABOVE, A PHONE CALL BY DP ACTIVIST AND ROLDOS' CONFIDANT MAURICIO DAVALOS TO THE

DCM ON AUGUST 1 TAKES ON ADDED SIGNIFICANCE. DAVALOS SAID THAT HE HAD BEEN TOLD BY A FAIRLY RELIABLE SOURCE THAT THE ESMERALDAS IRREGULARITIES WERE SIMPLY A SMOKE SCREEN TO COVER A PLANNED MASSIVE VOTE NULLIFICATION IN GUAYAS PROVINCE WHERE ROLDOS EMERGED WITH A HUGE MARGIN OVER HIS RIVALS. DAVALOS SAID THERE ARE PLANS AFOOT TO CAUSE THE NULLIFICATION OF SOME 175,000 BALLOTS FROM OVER 375 VOTING TABLES IN GUAYAS. HE NOTED AS ADDED EVIDENCE FOR SUCH A PLOT BOTH ARIZAGA'S REPEATED STATEMENT THAT GREATER FRAUD WAS IN THE OFFING, AND THE FACT THAT SEVERAL MEMBERS OF THE GUAYAS PROVINCIAL TRIBUNAL WERE ALSO IN QUITO ON AUGUST 31 FOR DISCUSSIONS WITH THE SET. (NOTE: IN PRESS STATEMENTS BOTH THOSE OFFICIALS AND SET PRESIDENT BAQUERO DE LA CALLE SAID THEY WERE NOT AWARE AT THIS TIME OF SERIOUS CONFIDENTIAL

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IRREGULARITIES IN GUAYAS, AND THAT CONSULTATIONS WERE TO DISCUSS LEGAL ASPECTS OF THE VOTE SCRUTINY.)

7. COMMENT: ARIZAGA'S STATEMENT MIGHT INDICATE INSIDE KNOWLEDGE. CERTAINLY HE HAS THE CFP WORRIED. THE ACTIONS OF THE SET DURING THE NEXT FEW DAYS WILL BEAR CAREFUL WATCHING. IT IS DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE HOW THERE COULD HAVE BEEN MASSIVE MANIPULATION OF THE VOTING CERTIFICATES IN GUAYAS, BUT NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE. IN ANY EVENT, WE HAVE STILL NOT RECEIVED ANY REPORTS THAT THE GOE IS INVOLVED IN THESE MACHINATIONS, IN SPITE OF ARIZAGA'S SUSPECTED RELATIONSHIP WITH JARRIN. GONZALEZ

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